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WHIRRAKEE

November 2012

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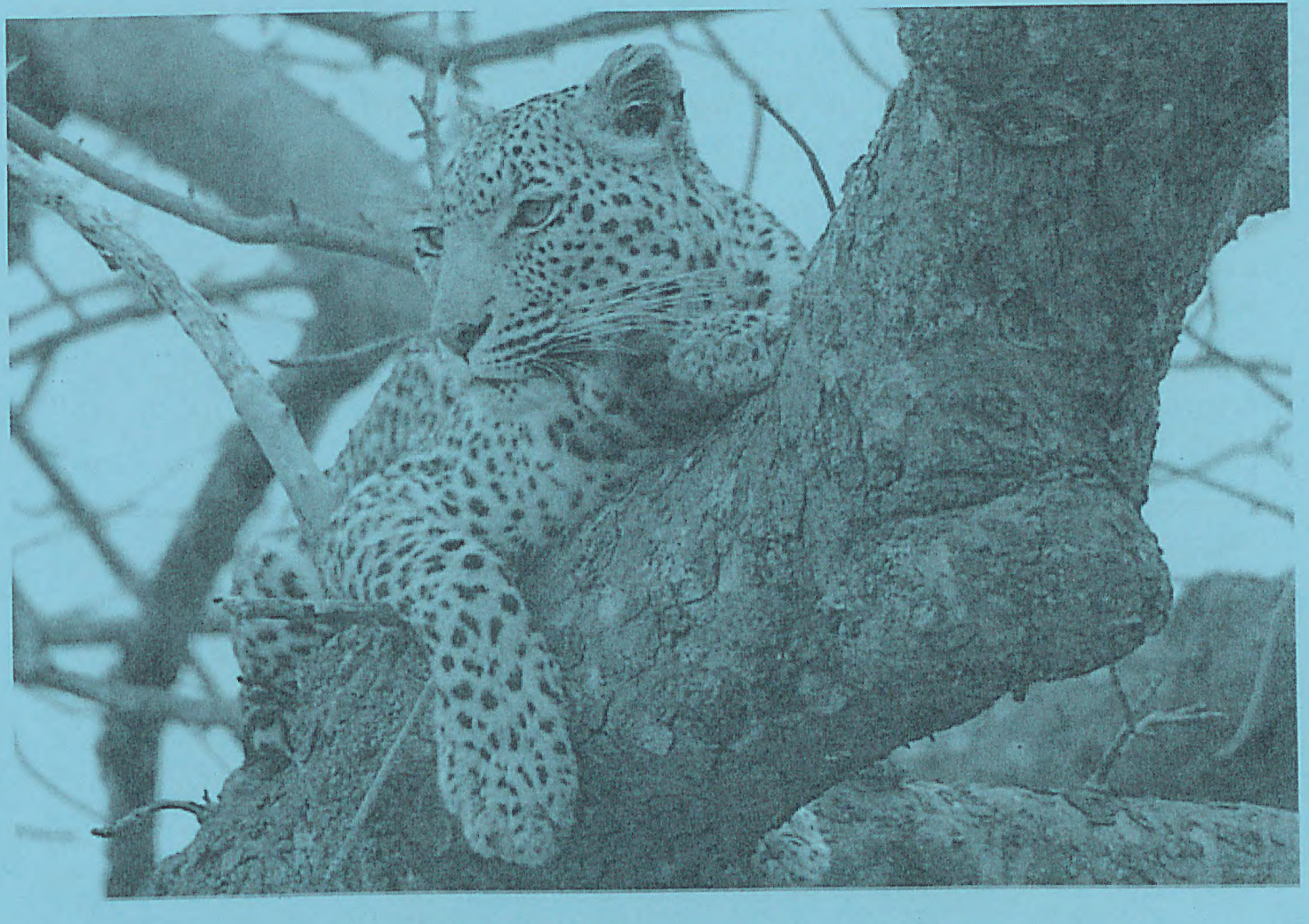

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552. Web address: www.BendigoFNC.com.au
ISSN 0812-423X e-mail address: info@bendigofnc.com.au

Office Bearers for 2012 - 2013

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Vice President	Richard Goonan	
Secretary/Public Officer	Stuart Fraser	5443 1326
Minute Secretary	*position vacant*	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	*to be confirmed*	
Garden Convenor/Secretary	*position vacant*	
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Co-editor	Gemma Candy	
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Vanessa Richardson	
Website coordinator/Webmaster	Ben Goonan	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)
Regular fauna excursions take place most Fridays. See page 11 for details.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 33, No. 10, November 2012

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
What have people noticed about this flowering season? I believe some species that are still flowering were finished this time in previous years, e.g. milkmaids and some wattles and orchids. Perhaps this is due to the late arrival of warm weather? Please send any such observations into the Whirrakee, *I am certain that other members would like to know what you have seen. In this issue, I have given some prominence to Jenny Shield's set of photos with flowers and insects. We actually know very little about plant-animal interactions at the local level, so any observations in this area are even more welcome. This emphasis was also in preparation for Ken Walker, the speaker this month, who is talking about native bees. This is a change of what was advertised previously, so I hope you can make it. Don't forget our Christmas dinner prior to the December meeting and the earlier starting time on that day. Enjoy the rest of spring!*

Front page photo and text Rod Orr (Rod and Jan have recently returned form South Africa)
I couldn't have been more impressed than I was by this magnificent creature. The Leopard seemed to have been sleeping off its evening meal when the Game Park drivers located it for us to marvel at. For most of the time while we were watching it, both eyes were at most half-open but then it started to wake up properly. It wasn't at all interested in us though - fortunately! We all stayed very quiet to make certain that we didn't attract too much attention.

Short Notices

November Excursion Program

A club excursion is planned for November. Please check out the destination and detail on page 9.

Nature Photography Camp

The Victorian Nature Photography Group Inc' invites members of the BFNC to Join with them for their Spring Flowers camp at Falls Creek Jan 5th--12th 2013.
Venue....Australian Alpine Club which is designed for self catering.
Fees.....Non Members $240.
Child under 17 years $120.
Under 3 years free.
Interested members should contact the Secretary Adrienne Meyer, 5 Carpenters Lane Nth', Hastings 3915. Ph.5979 1994.
Email: adrienne27@yahoo.com.au

October Castlemaine Observations

by Rod Orr

The orchid photos on page 7 were taken in the Castlemaine/Chewton area at the end of October. The Sun Orchid, *Thelymitra aristata*, doesn't occur here in Bendigo as far as I know (there are always surprises though, because I didn't know that they occurred as close as this to Bendigo either). This orchid is very rare in this region although it is more common in the sandy forests close to Melbourne (but never really 'common').

It should be thoroughly protected from unnecessary disturbance associated with burning - it's far enough away from human habitation for its forest habitat to be of no threat to anyone. An earlier occurrence was destroyed several years ago as a consequence of an over-enthusiastic forest burn followed by rain, which eroded the area where the orchid grew. There had been agreement with the Castlemaine Field Naturalists, who knew of its location, that it would be avoided and thus protected but then the Burn Plan was changed to encompass a much larger area because the smaller patches wouldn't burn properly. Oops! Total destruction resulted from this change, which produced a very intense fire, instead of carefully protecting this locally rare species! Surely, this should have been very embarrassing to those who were responsible!

In a case such as this, a very large area of forest surrounding such a locally rare plant should be actively protected from fire and not threatened by such processes as forest burns in the area. If forest burning is conducted there it would be a biodiversity-threatening process initiated by the same Department, which is also responsible for the protection of Victoria's biodiversity - what lunacy!

Jan & I were very excited to find this orchid - neither of us had ever seen it before although I was familiar with its photos which can be found in many references.

The photo of the Bearded Greenhood Orchid (see page 7) was taken in much the same location - the whole area is very diverse with particularly impressive orchid diversity. This observation gives the lie to the claim which is often made in an attempt to justify forest burns generally, that the expected result will be an increase in orchid diversity, even the 'creation' of new orchid sightings of species which were not known before from the burnt area. The Bearded Greenhood is more commonly found South of Bendigo although there are just a few small colonies surviving in our surrounding forests.

The third orchid on page 7 is *Caladenia iridenscens*. This lovely little orchid also grows in the forests South-east of Castlemaine. It's a much easier trip than having to travel to the Grampians to see it flowering. They are beginning to flower now in the same general area as the Sun orchids & the Bearded Greenhood Orchids. It's a very interesting forest to visit. Not far away there are very good birdwatching places as well where we have been able to observe Painted Honeyeater, Olive-backed Oriole, Eastern Yellow Robin & many other interesting bird residents & visitors.

Another beautiful Family Nature Club event down at the frog pond at Crusoe No. 7. It was 'Water Week' and the theme was 'Water Creatures', with Cass Davies leading the activities.

Photographer: Joy Clusker

← On the left is the nymph of dead leaf grasshopper

The spider below is a female *Dolomedes instabilis*, a fish-eating nursery-web spider, which is quite common ↓

Insects and Plants Photos by Jenny Shield

Here, you can have a really close look at some activities of insects on flowering plants. Normally such interactions are too quick or too small to see clearly. Below are hoverflies that were stationary long enough for Jenny to capture them. Notice the bristles on the antenna of the hoverfly, amazing!

Here are ants and beetles, also seeking out something from the flowers. This could be food, drink, warmth, shelter, a mate, substances that help in their courtship and probably a myriad other things that we don't understand. It is a rare sight to see a billy button this close up. They are in the daisy family, but don't really look like your typical daisy flower, do they?

There is no end of interesting flowers…

↑ *Leucopogon virgatus*, Common Beard Heath (photo by Jenny Shield)

←*Thelymitra aristata*, the Great Sun-orchid (see note on page 3, Photos: R Orr)

Bearded Greenhood Orchids, *Pterostylis plumosa* ↓

↑ *Caladenia iridescens* (Castlemaine area)

'June 2004 - June 2012 image records of fauna response to the provision of a permanent water point in a Dry Woodland Fragment'

by Sabine Wilkens

David Stewart is a past president of the Entomological society of Victoria, but his interests span well beyond invertebrates. He talked to the club in June, but until now, there has been no room to report on his passion.

A few years ago (2004), David purchased two blocks of land at Mt Korong to develop especially in support of local fauna of all creeds. This mountain (hill?) is like an island in grazing and cereal cropping land, and David quickly obtained 'Land for Wildlife' status for his blocks. One of the first things David noticed was the distinct lack of water in the bush blocks. Although water was available in some semi-permanent seeps on the mountain, David felt that small animals would be too exposed accessing this, so he established a large shed to collect water and connected to this a water trough on the ground. He also established nest boxes

The new shed was positioned so that David could photograph the wildlife accessing the water, and in the long times of his absence, a remotely tripped camera was also installed.

By all accounts, the wildlife reacted instantaneously to the new source of water. David's presentation was a rapidly played medley of this wildlife, which was amazingly varied, in what might look from the outside, a dry and lifeless piece of bush.

There were echidnas, lorikeets (not a common bird in Mt Korong area), diamond firetails (who have nested there every year), treecreepers, stumpy tails, sacred kingfisher, masked wood swallow, pobblebonk frogs, wallabies, native bees, robber flies, bee-eaters and even buderigars, and brushtail possum, quail, kookaburra and many more.

The local fringe myrtle is an important source of nectar and pollen for many invertebrates, and David showed photographs of the plant covered in jewel beetles. The water point also provided a social meeting place, as wasps were seen to 'meet and mate'.

On hot days, the water troughs are also used by animals to cool off. We saw kangaroos sitting half-immersed in the water, as well as birds bathing and reptiles were seen too.

In times of temperature stress, the water resource is shared by animals that would, at other times, squabble over it. On black Saturday, birds with open beaks were seen gathered in a small fleck of shade, bunched up like sardines, yet still and 'peaceful'. At the water trough too, many different species were sharing the water, when normally they would visit one after another.

For some years, the photos showed the block's wildlife in drought times and it is amazing how much wildlife there was in such difficult times. After the rains had returned, the nearby dam filled and some images showed goannas bathing there, the number of jewel beetles and native bees on the fringe myrtles went up enormously, and we even saw a photo of a *Drosera* with a adult sized dragon fly caught in its sticky petals.

At present, David visits the block every 3 to 4 weeks for a weekend, with occasional longer spells there to take more photos in person. The installed remote-controlled camera is set off by movement and heat, and it took a little while before this worked smoothly. In summer, for example, an animal walking though the hot air, did not set off the camera, so it needed to be made more sensitive.

Supplying water for wildlife has been a controversial topic in ecological circles, as, for example, an artificial source of water might attract weeds and vermin. However, this does not seem to have happened on David's block... he has seen evidence of a female fox, but foxes are few in number and seem to keep the rabbits at bay. David believes that water is a limiting factor in this environment, and by supplying it, he is helping the wildlife on his block and surrounding country, as they can avoid seeking water in more exposed sites.

May be the snow white wattlebird would not have survived in open country, but it was plainly seen on one of the photos.

The land must be rich in food, as David observed large flocks of wood swallows, staying for 140 days. If each swallow eats five invertebrates a day, there is a lot of food eaten during their stay! Lerps are a plentiful source. Ants are known to transfer huge numbers of these underground for storage

The remotely tripped camera is not only good to capture the presence of wildlife, but also their behaviour. Animal behaviour on extreme days is especially interesting, as are various feeding behaviours in an undisturbed environment. David's camera, for example showed bee-eaters feeding on larvae of cicada, then later on the adults. Animals using locusts for food caused some concern during the period where they were sprayed *en masse*. However, no obvious ill effects were observed by David himself, nor by his camera.
However other disturbances have been observed, for example, the grading and widening of roads and the dust load associated with such works. Also, 1080 bait stations to control rabbits might be problematic for some animals.

David's property is fenced, but only to recognise the boundary, not as a boundary for wildlife. It consists of a low fence that is ignored by the wildlife.

All of us present enjoyed the gallery of photos. It was very heartening to see so much wildlife, and David's dedication to support it.

Bill Holsworth thanked the speaker, especially for conducting this long term study, long enough to see changes over the seasons and over the years. These thousands and thousands of photos generated by David himself and by his cameras *in absentia*, are an incredibly valuable data set.

BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB NOVEMBER 2012 EXCURSION

DATE: Saturday 17 November 2012 (weekend after the general meeting)

LEADER/ORGANISER: John Lindner

LOCATION: Kamarooka Forest section of the Greater Bendigo National Park

SUBJECTS: Eucalyptus distilling and its history. Plants . Birds (especially evidence of the Mallee Fowl, now extinct in this area)

ATTRACTIONS
Typical small mallee fowl mound. The big mallee fowl mound (see August *Whirrakee)*. Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery with its dwelling and various old machinery. Mallee eucalypt species (Blue, Bull, Green, Kamarooka). Wildflowers and birds

MODE OF TRAVEL
Driving with some moderately long and short walks

GUEST SPEAKER AND GUIDE
Noel Ruedin, son of Lorna and Leon Ruedin who once operated the factory we will see. History of the distillery and reminiscences about the Whipstick

MAP: A map of the area will be available

MEETING at BFNC clubrooms, 8.30 am

CAR TRAVEL DETAILS
Out to Huntly via Midland Highway. Up the Tennyson Road to the track into Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery . Move over to Clays Road (Kamarooka East Road) to look at various flora, including Kamarooka Mallee. Total return distance is about 80 km.

COST
We will car pool as much as possible. It is suggested that passengers contribute $5 towards the cost of driving the car they are in.

WALK DETAILS

1. 2 km along narrow bush track to Ruedin's eucalyptus distillery (= 4 k return)

Note: You must carry your own food and water, preferably in a backpack, to the distillery where we will have morning tea and lunch. We may be able to have one car to take people in who are unable to walk this distance.

2. 0.5 km along track to the big mallee fowl mound (= 1.0 km return)

3. 0.5 km around the bush at Clays Road.

Total walking distance is therefore is about 5.5 – 6.0 km.

WHAT TO WEAR AND BRING

Cool, cover-up clothing
Hat
Sturdy walking shoes or boots
Water
Morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea
Binoculars
Camera

We have not had any spider pictures for a while, so here is one, photographed by Jenny Shield, seen on her doorstep on September 20. It is a female *Habronestes helenae*

Here is a bit of information I found when searching this genus:

Habronestes is an ant-eating spider genus that occurs only in Australia. Spiders in this genus are 2.5 to 10.5 mm long, with an orange or sepia brown body and yellow or pale brown legs. *H. boq* is the first spider named after a sponsor (the Bank of Queensland) in a new program by the Queensland Museum. The idea of this is to raise money for the museum's biodiversity research. The following website even offers naming a spider after someone as a gift idea…

http://www.cosmosmagazine.com/node/501

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday November 14 7.30pm
Dr Ken Walker, Senior Curator of Entomology and Arachnology, Museum Victoria, will talk about 'Australian Native Bees'.

Wednesday December 12 6.30pm
Professor Max Finlayson, Director, Centre of Research Excellence: Institute for Land, Water and Society, Charles Sturt University: 'The biodiversity crisis – globally and Australia'.
For the December meeting, we usually share a meal (hence the earlier starting time). Everyone is welcome to contribute something. Please bring your own drinks and utensils.

Club Excursions in November
See page 9 for details of an excursion organized by John Linder.

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

Positions Vacant
The BFNC is urgently looking for an enthusiastic member who can take on, or help with responsibilities of the club garden. The garden is well-established and in great shape, but especially at the moment, needs a bit of maintenance work (as all gardens in Bendigo right now) to get on top of the spring weeds. This is an ongoing position for one person, but can also be taken on by a small group.

The BFNC is also looking for a member who will take the minutes at our general meetings. This is a small but crucial job for somebody who attends regular meetings, or would like a good reason to do so.

Please phone Jan Orr with any expressions of interest for both positions.

Family Nature Club
The next activity will involve walking/riding and telling stories of the land. Please register if you are turning up with family, or let Jan and Rod know if you intend to offer assistance.
Check out their 2011 and 2012 activities at http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Registration:
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

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